



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 8, 2022



To: Rep. Josh Elliott, Chair
Sen. Derek Slap, Chair
Rep. Irene Haines, Ranking Member
Sen. Kevin Witkos, Ranking Member
Distinguished Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

From: Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

Re: Raised HB 5299 - An Act Increasing the Age for Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to share our comments regarding Raised HB 5299 - An Act Increasing the Age for Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation to provide financial resources for post-secondary education for youth up to 30 years of age. This legislation, however, leaves out the critical component of a case management model of support. Success of our older youth is based on the support that they receive while achieving post-secondary education - not solely a result of the financial assistance provided.

Under existing state statutes and DCF policy, youth who are committed to the Department as of their 18th birthday may continue to receive DCF support up through 21 years of age as a Services Post Majority (SPM) youth, while they transition into adulthood, provided one of the following criteria is met:

- The youth is completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- The youth is enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education; or
- The youth is participating in a program or activity designed to promote or to remove barriers to employment.

Connecticut is unique in that youth can continue to receive support from DCF until 23 years of age via a waiver under certain circumstances.

SPM youth work with a Transitional Support Specialist (TSS) who is assigned a caseload primarily consisting of youths 16 to 23 years of age. These specially trained staff provide case management supports to the youth on their caseload, assessing the most appropriate educational/vocational program with them and ensuring a connection to community-based supports and educational advocacy. These services are an integral part of ensuring success for these youths, but it is not contemplated in this legislation for the proposed older age cohort.

Lastly, implementation of this bill would result in a significant unbudgeted cost. As the chart below indicates, approximately 5,000 young adults would be eligible for assistance. DCF policy currently provides for financial assistance for post-secondary education expenses up to the amount of attending Central Connecticut State University. Implementation of the bill's provisions would also require DCF to hire more specialized staff and to fund additional contracts with community providers for support services.

	2021
Aged-Out Prior to 7/1/21, between 18-29 years	5,193
Aged-Out After 7/1/21, between 18-29 years	223
Age-Out Who Turned 30 After 7/1/21	528
Total	4,888
<i>Youth in Age Range currently receiving SPM</i>	<i>1,074</i>

We hope that this information helps to provide useful context surrounding this issue and look forward to further discussing this bill.